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ABSTRACT

This paper presents information from a project that examined what Japanese and U.S. teachers valued most about the culture of teaching and learning in each others' countries. Teachers participated in global partnership schools in which they had the opportunity to directly observe all facets of school operation in the other country. Data come from journals and a research report prepared by a Japanese cohort in 1999, focusing on observations by three high school teachers. The observations and reflections from three journals and reports illustrate several features of U.S. high school education that the Japanese teachers agreed upon: emphasis on school discipline, intensive and extensive use of technology, individualized instruction, variety of content and delivery methods, classroom management by the teacher, emphasis on self-initiative and self-direction, clear and precise descriptions of responsibility, differentiated support staff for teaching and learning, and student, teacher, and school accountability measured by achievement. (SM)

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Global Partnership Schools: What US and Japanese Teachers Value Most in the other Culture of Teaching and Curriculum

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Introduction

The periods of integrated studies (*sogoteki gakushu no jikan*) was proposed by Central Council on Education in 1996 as a part of a reform package. In 1998 Council on National Curriculum recommended necessary changes to incorporate the periods of integrated studies in the new revised curriculum[1]. The motives behind this are twofold: to develop creativity and critical thinking among children through integrating skills, knowledge and inquiry methods acquired in subject matters, and to deal with the global and social issues which may not be classified under any single subject. If society wants their children to be globally-minded, teachers must be trained to be their role models. In response to these recommendations, Council on Teacher Education identified three broad categories of teacher qualities and competence required by future teachers:

- qualities and competence to act from global perspectives
- qualities and competence required for adults who live in time of change
- qualities and competence entailed by teaching profession (*Kyoiku shokuin yosei shingikai*,1997)

However, it remains to be an issue how to develop these essential qualities and competencies for effective teachers.

When Cogan and his research group advocated the education for "multidimensional citizenship" in 21st century, they appropriately pointed out the need of teachers to be prepared in the theory and practice of multidimensional citizenship (Cogan, 1997). They recommended that programs for teacher professional development be based on and model the application of the following:

- deliberation based curriculum and pedagogy
- information and media based curriculum and pedagogy
- multiple uses of technology for teaching, learning, and researching
- focus upon environmental issues and problems of a global nature which have local manifestations
- a globally-oriented curriculum, that is to say one which uses examples, readings, illustrative pedagogical activities, etc. from other parts of the world
- democratic decision-making processes and values

[1] It is suggested to allocate 105 to 110 class hours in elementary and minimum of 70 class hours in lower secondary schools. In upper secondary schools, 105 to 120 class hours will be allocated in three years of study. Full implementation is scheduled for elementary lower secondary schools, and for high schools in 2002 and 2003 respectively.(*Kyoiku katei shingikai*,1998)

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- the development of cooperative, collaborative working relationships, and
- practice in the application of one's learning in the wider community

(Cogan, 1997,p20)

Global Partnership Schools is foremost an attempt to promote professional development of teachers in multidimensional, global citizenship education through application of the above-cited principles. Because Global Partnership Schools is such, we believe that it has a rich potential to contribute to the development of a whole teacher. The project provides the participating teachers with the opportunity for direct observation of the whole of school operation: classroom teaching, teacher- teacher relationship, student - teacher relationship, school building and classroom as a learning environment, school-community relationship, curriculum, etc. Through this intercultural collaboration, the teachers are learning what qualities and competence they as teaching professionals must acquire to survive the time of change and to educate the younger generation with "zest for living".

In this paper, we explore what the participating teachers value most in the culture of teaching and curriculum of the other party. It may well reflect the issues and concerns of the teachers in their own contexts. The journals and/or the reports submitted to the coordinator team and the comments shared at reflection meetings[2] are used as the primary data source.

Data Source and Framework for Analysis

The data we draw on in this paper comes from the journals and/or the research report prepared by year 1999 cohort in Japan. Of seven teachers from Naruto site, five were dispatched to the western NC. Of the remaining two JH teachers, one was assigned to ECU and the other to UNCW sites. Of the five teachers visited WCU sites, three were public high school teachers, and one from JH and one from elementary school.

We focus on the observations by the high school teachers from several reasons. First, they stayed in the same site[3] and the reflection/discussion was led by the authors. In addition, the authors have knowledge and information about the school they visited. We have more first-hand information of the teachers and the schools they visited. Second, these three teachers prepared both journals and research reports so that they could provide us more descriptive information than others[4] for

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[2] Considering the school calendar, American teachers and Japanese teachers visit the other party in June and March respectively. Both Japanese and American teachers spend one week in the site they have been assigned. For the American participants, two full days (from 8 am until students' dismissal around 3 p.m.) and two half days are scheduled for school visit in Naruto. Japanese teachers spend four full days in assigned schools in WCU site. After each school visit, both Japanese and American teachers have a short reflection meeting to share their observation and receive briefing on their experience. Reflection meetings are led by a coordinator, with an assistance of the partner coordinator.

[3] There are two stations for school visits in WCU due to its geography. Because they are about fifty miles apart., it was arranged that at least one coordinator in each station should be at the reflection meetings.

[4] Only Naruto teachers who visited WCU site prepared journals and research reports.

analysis. Third, high school education in Japan is the most difficult and problematic stage of education in Japan[5], but it is less known to American educators or teachers .[6]

The descriptive data of the three will be examined from the following points of view:

- student
- teacher
- staff
- curriculum
- school and community
- aims of education/schooling, educational system
- others

In each section, we first present the information about the teacher, then follow the examination of the journal. Synthesis of the data analysis and future tasks will be presented at the end.

Information about high schools in the Prefecture

High school is not a part of compulsory education in Japan. At the age of 15, when they are completing the 9th grade, all students must take an entrance examination to high schools. 95% of the 15 years old go to some kind of high schools. In big cities like Tokyo or Osaka, very competitive private high schools attract top students aspiring to prestige universities. In Tokushima Prefecture, where these three teachers work, private sector is very small and weak in education. Almost all junior high graduates could pass the examination to public high schools by matching one's achievement to the unofficial ranking of the high schools. The prefecture has established attendance zones on the basis of the residence: the students have a choice of high schools located within the assigned zone.

The top quarter go to college preparatory high schools (they are also ranked by the number of graduates accepted in famous university), and middle range to lower range students go to some kind of vocational schools such as technical and commercial. The very bottom range students go to the school without any job or skill oriented or college preparation. These schools are often called "*kadai shuchu ko*"(schools with concentration of problems) or "*teihen ko*"(bottom school). Which type of high school you aim at very much depends on one's achievement in junior high schools.

Mr.Ito[7]: Japanese Language Teacher

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[5] See: http://www.pref.kanagawa.jp/osirase/kyoikusomu/syorai/chukan/forum.htm
See also:Education Week. Will competition spoil Rakuhoku high? Feb.27,1985;
Rholen,T.(1983) Japan's high schools. Berkeley:University of California Press.

[6] There are several excellent books on Japanese elementary education, but a few on secondary education, particularly high schools: White (1988), Lewis(1995), Stigler & Hierbart (1999).

[7] Names are all pseudonyms.

Mr. Ito is an experienced Japanese language teacher in his early fifties. The school where he works now was reorganized several years ago. Formerly it was a commercial high school serving mainly female students who would seek clerical jobs in local firms. Demand for high school graduates with basic training in book keeping or filing is much smaller than before. The Prefectural Board of Education changed its name and opened a course with emphasis on English communication and international studies to attract more students. It attracted more than it could enroll in few years since its opening, however, less than the available seats are applying for the course in the past few years. As he applied for the project, Mr. Ito was interested in focusing on what support independent and self-directed learning by students, and how cross-cultural learning should be encouraged and conducted. He has finished his master's at NUE in instruction and curriculum.

Observation and Reflection

"Disciplined" is the first word that Mr. Ito had in mid. No matter what the subject was, the students looked serious and attentive. Rarely found a snoozing student in a classroom. When someone talked, they looked at the speaker and listened to him/her with attention. Teachers are strict with snoozing, being late or skipping classes and the students observe those rules.

> *Students in every classroom I observed were involved in their work seriously. Advanced classes are really advanced in its content. In the United States, schools are for instruction and for learning, therefore the most important job for the teachers is management of classroom for learning. Students are disciplined by classroom rules and hidden curriculum to occupy themselves with learning.*

Mr. Ito further reflected on why Japanese teachers were not able to manage their classrooms to be learning-serious.

> *Japanese schools are expected to play various roles so that the original function of schools, that is teaching and instruction, tends to be neglected. In Japan, students don't have broad options or choices in course offering, the students' needs are not met, so it is difficult for the schools to flunk the students by the reason that they do not well in the lessons... Japanese school rules are not for learning, bur rather to stop the danger of demoralization of the whole.*

Although programs and course offerings are diverse, the general approach to teaching is more experiential, activity-based, practical: dancing in a Spanish class, editing School Newspaper, programming, electric car in vocational course, school band, music classes, house construction project.

> *Smaller class size, but students in different grades are studying in the same room. It's because of individual planning of courses to lead to one's future career choice and to meet one's ability and needs. Mixed grades have certain positive aspects. Younger students are motivated by watching the older ones, while the older ones can assist younger students. They are learning from teaching each other.*

"Accountability" is another key word of his observation and reflection. Students, teachers and schools are evaluated against the standards, and they have to be accountable for the results. The primary responsibility and goals of the students, teachers and staff are clearly defined. Support system to achieve own goals and responsibilities are provided, too.

> *The teachers are expected to dedicate themselves to teaching. The students on the other hand, are required to boost their achievement. The system and the environment of a school correspond to these primary objectives. A variety of specialized staff is provided to take care of home visits, student career guidance and counseling, attendance record keeping. Test records and grade are processed and handled by the central office. The students visit counselors when they have problems... The responsibility of teachers is to arrange his/her classroom conducive to learning, with appropriate equipment in order, prepare necessary classroom materials and wait for the students. The evaluation criteria of teachers by administrators are performance levels of the teachers. The teachers are challenged by a very tough performance evaluation. Consequently they will require their students to show serious attitude toward learning in classrooms. Instruction is taking place on the premises that both teachers and students are seriously committed in what they should be accountable for.*

Mr. Ito mentioned that he liked the internship, which offers more in-depth clinical experience before going into the profession. Close collaboration between public schools and teacher training institute was pointed out. One of the concerns he referred to was the state test has some influence on classroom learning. In some classes, he observed p rote memory for the test. Unlike his previous understanding, Mr. Ito found that both students and teachers are under strict control by the state through testing and performance evaluation.

> *Distinctly outlined responsibility and division of labor was found in the role of a principal. The teachers can request something to the school, but it's the decision by the principal to meet it or not. The principal as the leader of a school is a decision-maker to be accountable for school management, including performance evaluation, budgeting, safety control, student discipline. Like a manager of commercial firms, they are required to possess administrative skills.*

Mr. Mori: Mechanics teacher

Mr. Mori is a forty years old mechanics teacher in a technical high school. After earning an engineering degree with a teacher certificate, he first took a job as a mechanical engineer. After several years of work, he decided to enter teaching profession. He is so specialized in automatic controlling and robot, the students he supervised had won special prizes in contests. The school offers special training in computer programming, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, but as is the case with Mr. Ito's school, the demand for high school graduates are becoming smaller and smaller. Public high schools in the prefecture are unofficially ranked

by its academic rigorousness. The school has a predominantly male population. His research interests were threefold: how to meet the individual differences and differential needs of the students, standard curriculum and individual teachers' discretion in decision making on curriculum, and definitions of roles for schools, community and families.

Observation and Reflection

His journals and reflection paper are very well focused on the topics he wanted to observe. As a teacher of a vocational school, he is very much interested in how to make his students actively involved in their learning. Mr. Mori found the idea of comprehensive high schools very positive.

> *One of the differences between high schools in NC and Japan is that they pull all students in the community into one high school. Some students take special education, some take vocational courses, and the others study the subjects leading to colleges. The students who vary in their ability levels and career aspirations go to a same school in a community, and community people seem to believe in its significance. I saw some handicapped students in wheel chairs being helped by their classmates. Some students were volunteering in a class for the students with special needs. The schools function as the places where diverse people work together to overcome the difference in ethnic background, physical handicap, whatever you name it.*

He admits that Japanese technical high schools are more well-equipped than US high schools. However, he contends that Japanese system of establishing separate high schools by specialization like general studies, technical, commercial, agricultural and fishery may label the students by the type of the school they go.

> *Because American high schools receive all the students in the community in one place, they provide a large variety of courses of various levels to meet their needs. .... As a consequence, schools have fostered the attitudes among the students to do their best no matter what level they are in or no matter what future they plan. Teachers are trying to do their job for self-fulfillment of the students. When students see physically handicapped students fully engaged in their tasks and volunteer students help them, these sights tell more eloquently than words that every student must do one's own best.*

Mr. Mori well understands that the differentiated school staff contributes to the education to meet individual needs. Individualization of instruction, or meeting individual needs takes place in classrooms in the form of assigning different tasks depending performance levels. Another example of differentiation is to give opportunities for high achievers to maximize their ability and potentials. He reflects on his own classes back home, and concludes that downsizing of Japanese class sizes might be more cost-effective than the present system because it is wasting so much time, energy and the potentials of many high school students.

As to curriculum, he was briefed by the US coordinator that the State Department

of Education has more control than the federal government but "standard movement" and textbook publishers and adoption system have significant effects toward standardization of curriculum. Contrary to what he thought, NC course of study specifies what to be learnt at what grade. Since the state achievement test is administered to all students in high schools, teachers are necessitated not to deviate from the course of study. However, Mr. Mori finds that each teacher uses his/her ingenuity when they conduct classroom teaching. It is reflected in the extensive use of computers and other technology, the use of real things and lifelike models in classrooms. It helps the students to have more concrete images of the topic they are learning about. Very colorful and attractive display in the classrooms from elementary to high schools. This is only possible when teachers are assigned their home room and the group of students come in on their class schedules. The school building as a whole is arranged to contribute to positive learning: recognition of honor students, outstanding achievement in cultural, social and sports activities, banners with positive messages to encourage learning and make efforts.

- *Together We Make A Difference.*
- *OUR School, a GREAT place to LEARN.*
- *You never know how much you can do until you try.*
- *Never settle for less than your best.*
- *Today is the day you make your choices for tomorrow.*
- *Your "I Will" is more important than your IQ.*
- *Attitude is the mind's paintbrush. It can color any situation.*

It was Mr. Mori's impression that the each role to play by school, community and families are clear and precise, which was very contrary to his stereotype image of the United States: free, rough, rules of thumbs.

> *(In the school I visited,) the students are not reprimanded severely for dress or hair. They belong to family discipline. It would never happen in the United States that a teacher go to the police and take the student, who shoplifted, along to his/her home. It is something to be taken care of by the police, and it is regarded as excesses of authority if a teacher get involved in a case like this. Schools should be responsible for school life, and give guidance only when it is appropriate..... Assistant principals give guidance to individually when students have problems with attendance or attitudes in classrooms. These are within the responsibility of schools. In the United States, land of liberty, efforts are made for the students to observe discipline of school life.*

Mr. Mori says that the proverb "so many countries, so many customs" is true in education. At the same time, he adds that it is also true that even different cultures share something in common. What he found in common between Japan and the United States is the teachers' sincere wish for children to fully grow his/her potentials.

> *I am quite convinced that both American and Japanese teachers find their*

reward of teaching in wishing sincerely and supporting the growth of their children, and building mutual trust between the children and the teachers themselves. I pinned the colorful banner in a classroom, which I bought in the States. It reads: Attitudes is the mind's paintbrush. It can color any situation. I'll keep this in my mind, and try to make a first small step to improve my immediate surroundings.

Ms. Yamada: English as a Foreign Language Teacher

Ms.Yamada is in her late 20's, and have been teaching English as a foreign language. Her high school is the only academic oriented one in the city, but its overall academic standing in the prefecture is somewhere in the middle. More than a half of the students go to some kind of higher education, not far from home. She was interested in seeking the possibility of student exchange for international understanding and the thematic studies. Although high schools are generally not enthusiastic about introduction of the periods for integrated studies, Ms.Yamada seems to be motivated to try something new with her students in those periods.

Observation and Reflection

Ms. Yamada visited the same high school as Mr. Ito. Interestingly enough, there finds less mentioning about discipline than the other two teachers in her journal. Instead she writes more about the professional development opportunities.

NCCAT(The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching) offers a variety of in-service programs throughout a year. The participants learn and experience new things, stimulate their curiosity and inquiry mind in subject matters, and restore their willingness and motivation for teaching..... It is required to submit recommendation letters and research proposals to be selected for participation in seminars, but the state department of education pays room and board. The enthusiasm of the state to maintain higher quality of teachers.

On the way to a restaurant for breakfast, we had an animated conversation about working conditions of teachers in both countries. US teachers are paid only 10 month equivalent a year, so that they seek additional income by teaching at universities and/or professional development seminars for teachers during summer. In addition to regular state licensure, there is a movement to obtain a National Board Certification. Many NC teachers have already made this certificates. Teachers' salary will be increased according to new qualification.

This may be attributed to the type of the school she works in. Her school is not the academically top, but more students go to four year colleges than the other two schools. Another possibility is her developmental stage of a career. Compared to the other two teachers, she's the youngest, and less experienced. Her quest for professional development in subject matter may be stronger. The teachers in those academic oriented schools attach more importance to core subjects for college education.

After observing the Building Trades Class constructing a house as a part of class

project, she writes:

> *The high school offers various electives and the students can select according to one's interests. Those electives teach professional knowledge and practical skills, which may be taught in vocational colleges in Japan. In that sense, high schools are training people to fare in the work right after finishing the school. Students looked very much involved in the lesson. But it seems that some teachers are concerned that students prefer those practical subjects, and many students have lost interests in academic subjects or think it unnecessary to take those classes.*

She shows some sympathy when her partner teacher complains of less demanding parents.

> *We discussed how we carry out our exchange from now. In the evening, again at Mr. Peterson's home, we talked more about our family and workplace. He said that he is rather strict and assigns more homework among the faculty, and there are some families who are rather embarrassed by his demand. He lamented that less and less families want strict discipline or pressure to study harder because they misunderstand schools as something like child-care.*

Ms. Yamada sees the differentiated staff from a little critical perspective. Contrary to the other two teachers in vocationally oriented schools, she is apprehensive that specialization in and differentiation of the responsibility may not create the culture to educate a whole person by the whole staff. She fears that less time is found for the entire faculty to get together for collaboration or to interact with the students out of the classrooms.

Because she teaches English as a foreign language, she seems to reflect more on cultural differences and diversity. The sightseeing tour to Cherokee Museum interested her in the history of the native Americans as well as how the history of the minorities be taught in schools. Another episode she cited in the journal is Spanish class. The teacher tried to motivate the students in the language through Spanish dance. Ms. Yamada saw this class an example of learning through five senses, which is rather unusual in Japan. She asked the teachers why some of the students didn't participate in the dancing but sat at the desk with their textbooks. The answer was that they didn't want to. In group-oriented classrooms, this will not be allowed. Being explicit about what they want to do or not, and appreciation of being different in behaviors was interpreted by as a value in American culture.

She studied senior project at the school as an example of the thematic study she intends to do with her students. Behind this project activity she sees the American philosophy of education which values self-initiative and self-directed learning more than anything.

> *Behind the success of this type of project (senior project), it is obvious that there is the philosophy of education in the United States that respects self-initiative of the students and emphasizes the enhancement of self-direction.*

When we introduce thematic learning in Japan, I am afraid that we must contrive ways for the students to find the research topics. Because they spend so much time in schools and cram schools, and they are not good at effective use of their own time, they will find it very difficult to be aware what they are really interested in.

Synthesis of Observation and Some Tasks

The observation and reflection in three journals and reports illustrate some features of American high school education all three teaches agree on. Those include the following:

- emphasis on school discipline
- intensive and extensive use of technology
- individualized instruction
- variety of content and delivery methods
- classroom management by teacher
- emphasis on self-initiative and self-direction
- student, teacher and school accountability measured by achievement test
- clear and precise descriptions of responsibility
- differentiated support staff for teaching-learning

Depending on the personal interests, what they see and value are somewhat different, too. Teachers in vocational schools support practical skill oriented classes, which will be of direct use when they go into work. Differentiation of responsibility and specification were also mentioned positively by teachers in vocational schools. On the other hand, the teacher in academic oriented schools was concerned more on liberal education with a balance in subject matters, and the development of a whole person. This teacher shows significant interests in professional development of teachers. However, the elementary and junior high teachers who visited WCU share much of the observation and reflection described here. All teachers were struck that both students and teachers are under the pressure of accountability and state testing. The precise specification of curriculum was another surprise.

Future research should focus on the teacher change in the levels such as knowledge, attitude and behavior using multi-dimensional citizenship perspective. Semi-structured interviews will be helpful to help the teachers to reflect on their exchange with the partners, the practice of lessons, the interaction with the students. At the same time, the teachers should be encouraged and supported to share their experience with the fellow teachers.

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